
WHO guideline development group meeting
Complementary feeding of infants and children

Geneva, Switzerland
2-4 December 2019

SCOPE AND PURPOSE

The World Health Organization (WHO) is committed to driving public health impact in all countries – low, middle and high income – ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages. Recognizing the importance of complementary feeding for appropriate child growth and development, the World Health Assembly (WHA) in 2018 called upon Member States “to promote timely and adequate complementary feeding in accordance with the guiding principles for complementary feeding of the breastfed child, as well as guiding principles for the feeding of the non-breastfed child 6–24 months of age.”

In 2003 the Pan American Health Organization developed a set of 10 *Guiding principles for complementary feeding of the breastfed child*¹ and in 2005 WHO developed a set of 9 *Guiding principles for feeding non-breastfed children 6-24 months of age*.² While still extremely useful, the Guiding principles documents referred to by the WHA are dated and there is a need to update the documents, taking into consideration the scientific literature published over the past 15 years. The documents were focused primarily on the prevention of undernutrition and did not address concerns over rising rates of childhood obesity and the development of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Early childhood nutrition is now recognized as a critical period for not only the prevention of undernutrition but also the prevention of obesity and NCDs.

World Health Assembly (WHA) resolution 71.9 on Infant and Young Child Feeding affirmed that “the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding contributes substantially to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals on nutrition and health, and is a core element of quality health care”, and requested WHO “to continue to update and generate evidence-based recommendations.”

Through its unique normative function in health, WHO aims to provide updated global guidance on *complementary feeding of infants and children* to promote optimal growth and development. A guideline on complementary feeding has been designated as a WHO global good.

¹ http://iris.paho.org/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/752/OP_194.pdf

² <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/43281/9241593431.pdf>

A WHO guideline development group is being formed following the procedures outlined in the *WHO Handbook for guideline development*, 2nd edition.³ An initial meeting of the guideline development group is now being planned.

The main objectives of this meeting are to:

- Discuss new issues in complementary feeding since the publication of the *Guiding principles for complementary feeding of the breastfed child* and *Guiding principles for feeding non-breastfed children 6-24 months of age*;
- Review a draft outline for updated complementary feeding guidelines and provide input into the scope of the guideline;
- Assist the steering committee in developing the key questions to be addressed in the guideline; and
- Identify the critical and important outcomes that will guide the evidence reviews.

The expected outcome of this meeting is to have consensus on a proposed outline for the guideline and the specific questions to be addressed.

³ [WHO handbook for guideline development, 2nd ed. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2014](#)